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**From:** Leigh-Ann Kazolas <kazwomanlb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 31, 2023 9:43 AM  
**To:** npham@ocfairboard.com; nkovacevich@ocfairboard.com; bbagneris@ocfairboard.com; tbilezikjian@ocfairboard.com; djackson@ocfairboard.com; dlabelle@ocfairboard.com; nrubalcava-garcia@ocfairboard.com; rruiz@ocfairboard.com  
**Cc:** Summer Angus  
**Subject:** Letter about Equestrian Center history  
**Attachments:** EquestrianCenterHistory.pdf

Dear Members of the OC Fair Board,

Please find attached a letter I wish to submit on behalf of OC Fairgrounds Equestrian Center Task Force addressing some of the history of the Equestrian Center.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration,  
Leigh-Ann Kazolas

October 28, 2023

Dear OC Fair Board of Directors,

In looking at the present state of anything, it is always important to consider its past.

Every few years, OCFEC Staff attempts to close the Equestrian Center, tear it down and pave it over. This is despite strong public and political opposition, and despite the 32nd DAA's purpose under the California Food and Agricultural Code to **"construct, maintain and operate recreational and cultural facilities of general public interest in Orange County"**.  
<https://ocfair.com/public-information/>

**2009** - CEO Beasley and his staff proposed tearing down the Equestrian Center, paving it over and making it into "flat flexible space" aka parking. The public rallied with letters and spoke out in favor of the Equestrian Center. Local civic and county officials and agencies wrote letters of support and spoke at meetings. The Board voted to keep the Equestrian Center and thus, the Equestrian Center remained.

**2018** – In contradiction to community input during workshops in 2017 calling for MORE Equestrian Center programs, opportunities and renovations, CEO Kramer and her staff's Master Site Plan proposed tearing down the Equestrian Center, paving it over and making it into an “RV Parking Lot and Staging Area for the Fair”. The public rallied with letters and spoke out in favor of keeping the Equestrian Center. Local civic and county officials and agencies wrote letters of support and spoke at meetings. The Board voted unanimously in support of keeping the Equestrian Center. And thus, the Equestrian Center remained.

**2022** – Instead of taking over management/daily operations of the Equestrian Center as directed by the Board, Staff recommended that the Board award a daily maintenance and animal care contract for up to five years to an unqualified company that would generate a monthly operating loss of more than \$100K. despite the fact the Equestrian Center had historically generated profits. The Board ignored the public's concerns about the exorbitant award amount (far exceeding industry standard) and the Board unanimously and comfortably voted to operate at a large deficit (up to \$5million over 5 years) citing it as the cost of “starting a new business” and an “investment” in the facility. At the time, the District's In-House Counsel did not, at any public meeting, sound any alarms that operating the Equestrian Center at a deficit could create an illegal “gift of public funds” for the District's public recreational asset. The Equestrian Center is also left completely out of the \$230,000,000 Master Site Plan.

**Spring 2023** - There was sudden concern about the predicted financial losses. Staff seem unable to create a viable financial scenario bringing all work in-house without increasing boarder rental rates 70-80% above the market rate of other local facilities. The CEO was instructed to host two “listening sessions” with a select group of Equestrian Center users but none of the cost-saving ideas from those meetings were presented to the Board or reflected in Staff's updated scenarios.

**Board Meeting September 28, 2023** – There was urgent alarm about the possibility - but not 100% certainty - that running a public recreational facility at a deficit meets the definition of “illegal gifts of public funds”. Without public meetings or community input, this potentially unwarranted fear led to a rapid vote to close the Equestrian Center. There were not enough votes in favor of closing it and we thank the Board members for recognizing that the Equestrian Center is a valuable public asset. And thus, the Equestrian Center remains.

When looking at this past year’s events in the context of the Equestrian Center’s history, was all of this a coincidence or part of a pattern?

Why did Staff disregard the Board's Strategic Plan goals this year with regard to public engagement with the Equestrian Center? They did not conduct any public tours, field trips, open houses, events, any educational collaborations with Centennial Farm or “integration” into the Fair. In fact, 2023 was actually the first fair in years that did not include any Equestrian Center horses. The staff members hired to oversee the Equestrian Center are experts in public programs, yet none were held this year. The Equestrian Center was never mentioned on OCFEC social media or promoted in any way. Why is that?

The 32<sup>nd</sup> DAA is financially the strongest in the State, with a history of making sound financial decisions. Staff advised the Board that the best financial plan for the Equestrian Center operations was to award an exorbitant contract and to instantly transform a historically profitable entity into one that would now lose over a million dollars per year for five years. Why were no self-management “scenarios” created/presented/considered BEFORE the decision to outsource the work? Why was outsourcing to a company with no relevant experience and at huge financial loss the ONLY option presented to the Board at the time? Why did staff elect to “reinvent the wheel” instead of mimicking the numerous local examples of profitable public equestrian centers?

Several facility assessments have indicated the need for improvements and repairs at the Equestrian Center and yet Staff have excluded it entirely and repeatedly from the Master Site Plans and CapEx budgeting. Why? Staff has routinely blamed the previous Operator for the deferred maintenance even though capital improvements were not the contractual responsibility of the previous Operator (whose contract had also been month to month for the past 8 years). Why was nothing ever done to address any deferred maintenance or remedy any defaults? This year, no significant improvements, repairs, or maintenance were done to the facility except for the complete overhaul of the office space for Staff. In fact, the facility as a whole has declined rather than improved under the District’s management. How did this advance the Equestrian Center towards the Board’s “Best in Breed” boarding facility as stated in the Strategic Plan goals?

Given the history and recent events, the equestrian community has unfortunately lost some trust in the Staff's commitment to the Equestrian Center. We ask the Board to take a leading role in getting the Equestrian Center back on track and finding the best operator (or operating model) for the Equestrian Center, regardless of the timeline. We ask the Leadership Committee to seek outside assistance from experienced public equestrian center managers and supervise the RFP creation and award for this specialized job. We ask the Facilities Committee to allocate funds towards some of the needed improvements once a new operator is brought on board. Instead of continuing to "kick the can down the road", lift up that "can" and make it shine!

This Board has been entrusted with the stewardship of the entire property and all of its assets. The Equestrian Center is a unique and important corner of the property – one that aligns directly with the agricultural mission and the public recreational facility purpose of the District. This cherished public asset must not be lost due to mismanagement. The Board's Strategic Plan is based on a vision for the Equestrian Center that is a "Best in Breed Facility" that serves the public with a variety of programs. The equestrian community shares this vision. Local governments, community groups, elected officials and agencies share this vision

A 7-acre paved-over "flexible flat space" cannot and should not be this Board's legacy. Please find a way to keep this important public asset thriving and growing for generations to come.

Sincerely,  
The OC Fairgrounds Equestrian Center Task Force

**The following are Civic and County Resolutions and Letters of Support from 2009 when OCFEC staff proposed to demolish the Equestrian Center, pave it and create 7.5 acres of “flexible flat paved space”.**

**Resolutions do not expire unless they are amended.  
None have been amended.**

**New letters of support are in progress.**

RESOLUTION NO. 09- 17

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA, REQUESTING SUPPORT IN MAINTAINING THE EXISTING 7.5 ACRE EQUESTRIAN CENTER AT THE ORANGE COUNTY FAIR AND EVENT CENTER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO ENJOY.

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, the Orange County Fair and Event Center in Costa Mesa, California is celebrating its 118<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and

WHEREAS, The 32nd District Agricultural Association, doing business as the OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa, California, is a state entity within the Division of Fairs and Expositions, California Department of Food and Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Orange County Fair and Events Center in Costa Mesa, California is "Celebration of Orange County's Communities, Interests and Heritage;" and

WHEREAS, horses and livestock have always been part of the history, communities and heritage of Costa Mesa and Orange County; and

WHEREAS, equestrian activities have always been a part of the Orange County Fair in Costa Mesa, California; and

WHEREAS, the 15-acre Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California was constructed in the northeast portion of the Fairgrounds in 1980;

WHEREAS, the Fair's Master Plan, adopted by the Board of Directors in 2003 called for the removal of 7.5 acres of the Equestrian Center, with 7.5 acres to remain; and

WHEREAS, there is an tremendous public benefit in keeping the remaining 7.5 acres of recreational opportunity at the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California; and

WHEREAS, it is proven that horse-related activities provide wonderful alternatives for children, and horses help to inspire, teach and provide important personal development for all ages; and

WHEREAS, the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California provides irreplaceable public benefit to numerous local non profit youth

organizations, including opportunities for disabled youth; and

WHEREAS, local Costa Mesa and Newport Beach businesses benefit from the riders, boarders, staff, and volunteers who utilize the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California, and removal of the Equestrian Center would decrease revenue to those local businesses and cities; and

WHEREAS, there continues to be an increasing loss of equestrian facilities throughout the County, and removal of the Equestrian Center would eliminate a significant asset in the City's Park, Recreation, and Open Space Inventory that cannot be replaced; and

WHEREAS, the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center is on publicly owned land in Costa Mesa, California; and

WHEREAS, the Fair is considering replacing the last remaining 7.5 acre Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California with a paved parking lot which the original Master Plan EIR considered a significant adverse impact; and

WHEREAS, the "net cost" of relocating and replicating the existing Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center elsewhere in Costa Mesa has not been calculated and is expected to be significant. Costs associated with land acquisition and replacement of facilities will greatly exceed the \$65,000 per year in revenue generated by the existing facilities; and

WHEREAS, alternative parking options are available to the Orange County Fair and Events Center that do not require removing the existing Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California; and

WHEREAS, the benefit of a parking lot does not override the loss of the Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, and the public benefit and recreational opportunities it provides to Costa Mesa as well as the surrounding city residents, businesses, and youth organizations,

WHEREAS, alternative parking lot locations and options should be considered first before considering removal of the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center in Costa Mesa, California;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Costa Mesa hereby supports maintaining the existing 7.5 acre Equestrian Center at the Orange County Fair and Event Center in Costa Mesa, California for future generations to enjoy.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2009.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Allan R. Mansoor, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Julie Folcik, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kimberly Hale Barlow, City Attorney

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF ORANGE ) ss  
CITY OF COSTA MESA )

I, JULIE FOLCIK, City Clerk of the City of Costa Mesa, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the above and foregoing is the original of Resolution No. 09-17 and was duly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Costa Mesa at a regular meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2009, by the following roll call vote, to wit:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: MANSOOR, LEECE, BEVER, FOLEY, MONAHAN  
NOES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: NONE  
ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS: NONE

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereby set my hand and affixed the seal of the City of Costa Mesa this 4<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2009.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JULIE FOLCIK, CITY CLERK

(SEAL)

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF  
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

March 10, 2009

**WHEREAS**, the legal name of the Orange County Fair is the 32nd District Agricultural Association, doing business as the OC Fair & Event Center; the OC Fair is a state entity within the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Division of Fairs and Expositions; and

**WHEREAS**, the first OC Fair occurred in 1890 when the Orange County Community Fair Corporation was formed; in 1894 the Orange County Fair Association assumed responsibility of the OC Fair; the early OC Fairs showcased horse racing and livestock demonstrations; throughout the history of Orange County, the OC Fair has prominently displayed the equestrian community; and

**WHEREAS**, the mission of the Orange County Fair and Event Center is the "Celebration of Orange County's Communities, Interests and Heritage"; Orange County has a rich and strong equestrian heritage which continues today; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1980 the 15 acre Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center was constructed in the northeast portion of the Orange County Fairgrounds; in 2003, changes to the OC Fair's Master Plan as adopted by the OC Fair Board resulted in the eventual removal of 7.5 acres of the Equestrian Center's 15 acre operating area and the loss of over 100 stalls; and

**WHEREAS**, removal of the 7.5 acres reduced the OC Fair's options to accommodate the relocation of large animals during an emergency in the county; and

**WHEREAS**, since 1998 Orange County has witnessed the closure of numerous stable facilities that include Anaco Ranch in Anaheim, Peppertree Ranch in Brea, Huntington Crest Stables in Huntington Beach, UC Irvine Stables and the El Toro Equestrian Center in Irvine, River Trail Stables in Orange, Creekside Stables and Camp Cookie for Children in San Juan Capistrano, Knox Stables in Santa Ana, El Cajon Corrals and the Triple B Equestrian Center in Yorba Linda; the cumulative impact of these closures resulted in the loss of approximately 1,400 stalls; and

**WHEREAS**, considering the substantial loss of stable facilities in Orange County, there is a significant public benefit in preserving existing stables in Orange County including the stables located at the Orange County Fairgrounds; and

**WHEREAS**, it is the understanding of the Orange County Board of Supervisors that the OC Fair Board of Directors is actively considering the complete removal of the remaining 7.5 acre Equestrian Center; and

**WHEREAS**, Orange County agricultural lands declined from 60,521 acres in 1987 to only 13,152 acres in 2007, a reduction of 47,369 acres or 78%; elimination of the existing OC Fairgrounds equestrian facilities would contribute to this trend.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** does hereby support the preservation of the equestrian facilities at the Orange County Fairgrounds, opposes any action that would reduce the number of available stables, and encourages the OC Fair Board and the equestrian community to work together to preserve this vital resource and to incorporate its use into OC Fair events.

The foregoing was passed and adopted by the following vote of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, on March 10, 2009, to wit:

AYES: Supervisors: BILL CAMPBELL, JOHN M. W. MOORLACH, JANET NGUYEN  
CHRIS NORBY, PATRICIA BATES

NOES: Supervisor(s):

EXCUSED: Supervisor(s):

ABSTAINED: Supervisor(s):

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRMAN

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
                          )  
COUNTY OF ORANGE )

I, DARLENE J. BLOOM, Clerk of the Board of Orange County, California, hereby certify that a copy of this document has been delivered to the Chairman of the Board and that the above and foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly adopted by the Orange County Board of Supervisors .

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereto set my hand and seal.



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DARLENE J. BLOOM  
Clerk of the Board  
County of Orange, State of California

Resolution No: 09-023

Agenda Date: 03/10/2009

Item No: S28A



I certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors , Orange County, State of California

DARLENE J. BLOOM, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy

RESOLUTION NO. 09-03-17-03

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN JUAN  
CAPISTRANO, CALIFORNIA, SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF  
THE ORANGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES  
(7.5 ACRES)

**WHEREAS**, the legal name of the Orange County Fair is the 32<sup>nd</sup> District Agricultural Association, doing business as the OC Fair and Event Center; the OC Fair is a state entity within the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Division of Fairs and Expositions; and

**WHEREAS**, the first OC Fair occurred in 1890 and has embodied a rich and strong equestrian heritage ever since; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1980, the 15 acre Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Facility was constructed in the northeast portion of the Orange County Fairgrounds; in 2003, changes to the OC Fair's Master Plan, as adopted by the OC Fair Board, resulted in the eventual removal of 7.5 acres of the Equestrian Center's 15 acre operating area and the loss of over 100 stalls; and

**WHEREAS**, the removal of the 7.5 acres significantly reduced the Equestrian Center's ability to accommodate the relocation of large animals during an emergency in the county; complete elimination of the Equestrian Center facilities would further reduce the number of available locations in the county suited for emergency housing of large animals; and

**WHEREAS**, since 1998, Orange County has experienced a cumulative closure of over 1,400 stalls; and

**WHEREAS**, considering the substantial loss of stable facilities in Orange County, there is a significant public benefit in preserving the existing stables at the OC Fairgrounds; and

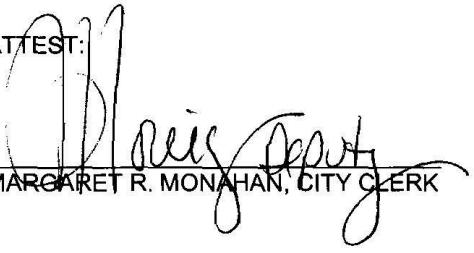
**WHEREAS**, it is the understanding of the City Council of San Juan Capistrano, that the OC Fair Board of Supervisors is actively considering the complete removal of the remaining 7.5 acre Equestrian Center; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of San Juan Capistrano does hereby support the preservation of the equestrian facilities at the OC Fairgrounds, opposes any action that would reduce the number of available stables, and encourages the OC Fair Board and the equestrian community to work together to preserve this vital resource and to incorporate its use into the OC Fair events.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2009.

  
MARK NIELSEN, MAYOR

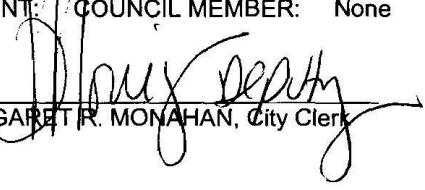
ATTEST:

  
MARGARET R. MONAHAN, CITY CLERK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF ORANGE ) ss.  
CITY OF SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO )

I, MARGARET R. MONAHAN, appointed City Clerk of the City of San Juan Capistrano, do hereby certify that the foregoing **Resolution No. 09-03-17-03** was duly adopted by the City Council of the City of San Juan Capistrano at a Regular meeting thereof, held the 17<sup>th</sup> day of March 2009, by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: Allevato, Freese, Hribar, Uso and Mayor Nielsen  
NOES: COUNCIL MEMBER: None  
ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBER: None

  
MARGARET R. MONAHAN, City Clerk

## **RESOLUTION NO. 09.040**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF  
THE CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA,  
SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF THE ORANGE COUNTY  
FAIRGROUNDS EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES (7.5 ACRES)**

**WHEREAS**, the legal name of the Orange County Fair is the 32<sup>nd</sup> District Agricultural Association, doing business as the Orange County Fair and Event Center; the Orange County Fair is a State entity within the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Division of Fairs and Expositions; and

**WHEREAS**, the first Orange County Fair occurred in 1890 and has embodied a rich and strong equestrian heritage ever since; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, the 15 acre Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Facility was constructed in the northeast portion of the Orange County Fairgrounds; in 2003, changes to the Orange County Fair's Master Plan, as adopted by the Orange County Fair Board, resulted in the eventual removal of 7.5 acres of the Equestrian Center's 15 acre operating area and the loss of over 100 stalls; and

12                   **WHEREAS**, the removal of the 7.5 acres significantly reduced the Equestrian Center's  
13 ability to accommodate the relocation of large animals during an emergency in the County;  
14 complete elimination of the Equestrian Center facilities would further reduce the number of  
available locations in the County suited for emergency housing of large animals; and

15 | WHEREAS, since 1998, Orange County has experienced a cumulative closure of over 1,400 stalls; and

18                   **WHEREAS**, it is the understanding of the City Council of Laguna Beach, that the Orange  
19 County Fair Board of Supervisors is actively considering the complete removal of the remaining  
7.5 acre equestrian center.

ADOPTED this 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2009.

Kelly Boyd  
Kelly Boyd, Mayor

ATTEST.

ATTEST:  
Martha Anderson

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2 I, Martha Anderson, City Clerk of the City of Laguna Beach, California do hereby certify  
3 that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted at a Regular meeting of the City Council of said  
City on May 5, 2009, by the following vote:

4 AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS: Pearson, Iseman, Rollinger, Egly, Boyd

5 NOES: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

6 ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

7 ABSTAIN: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

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9 City Clerk, City of Laguna Beach

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**RESOLUTION NO. 10368**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF ORANGE REQUESTING SUPPORT  
IN MAINTAINING THE EXISTING 7.5 ACRE  
EQUESTRIAN CENTER AT THE ORANGE  
COUNTY FAIR AND EVENT CENTER FOR  
FUTURE GENERATIONS TO ENJOY.**

**WHEREAS**, the Orange County Fair and Event Center (OCFEC) in Costa Mesa, California is celebrating its 118<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and

**WHEREAS**, the 32nd District Agricultural Association, doing business as the OCFEC, is a State entity within the Division of Fairs and Expositions, California Department of Food and Agriculture; and

**WHEREAS**, the mission of the OCFEC is Celebration of Orange County's Communities, Interests and Heritage; and

**WHEREAS**, horses and livestock have always been an integral part of the history, communities and heritage of Orange County, and equestrian activities have always been an important component of the OCFEC; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1980, the 15 acres of the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Facility was constructed. In 2003, changes to the OCFEC's Master Plan resulted in the removal of 7.5 acres of the Equestrian Center with a loss of over 100 stalls; and

**WHEREAS**, the removal of the 7.5 acres significantly reduced the Equestrian Center's ability to accommodate the relocation of large animals during an emergency in the County. Complete elimination of the 7.5 acres would further reduce the number of available locations in the County suited for emergency housing of large animals. The Fair's Master Plan, adopted by the Board of Directors in 2003 called for the removal of 7.5 acres of the Equestrian Center, with 7.5 acres to remain; and

**WHEREAS**, considering the substantial loss of stable facilities in Orange County, there is a tremendous public benefit in preserving the existing 7.5 equestrian acres at the OCFEC; and

**WHEREAS**, the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center provides irreplaceable public benefit to numerous local non-profit youth organizations, including opportunities for disabled youth; and

**WHEREAS**, it is the understanding of the City of Orange that the Orange County Fair Board of Directors is actively considering the complete removal of the remaining 7.5 acres Equestrian Center.

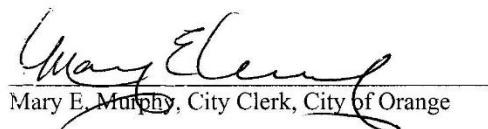
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council of the City of Orange hereby supports the preservation of the existing 7.5 acre Equestrian Center at the Orange County Fair and Event Center, opposes any action that would reduce the number of available stalls and encourages the Orange County Fair Board and the equestrian community to work together to preserve this vital resource.

**ADOPTED** this 28<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2009.



Carolyn V. Cavecche, Mayor, City of Orange

ATTEST:



Mary E. Murphy, City Clerk, City of Orange

I, MARY E. MURPHY, City Clerk of the City of Orange, California, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly adopted by the City Council of the City of Orange at a regular meeting thereof held on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of April 2009, by the following vote:

AYES:	COUNCILMEMBERS: Smith, Murphy, Cavecche, Bilodeau
NOES:	COUNCILMEMBERS: None
ABSENT:	COUNCILMEMBERS: Dumitru
ABSTAIN:	COUNCILMEMBERS: None



Mary E. Murphy, City Clerk, City of Orange



**ORANGE COUNTY  
REGIONAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RRTAC)**



March 31, 2009

Ms. Julie Vandermost  
Chair, Board of Directors  
OC Fair & Event Center  
88 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Dear Ms. Vandermost:

At the March 23, 2009 RRTAC meeting, Kristene McGovern, representing the Equestrian Coalition of Orange County (ECOC), appeared before and informed the Committee of the OC Fair Board of Directors' current consideration of the complete removal of the remaining 7.5-acre Equestrian Center.

As you know, the mission of the Orange County Fair and Event Center is the "Celebration of Orange County's Communities, Interests and Heritage". Equestrian activities have long been an integral element of the County's heritage, and continue to be so today. However, although interest in equestrian activities remains strong in the county, their future is threatened by the continuing elimination of support facilities.

The original 15-acre Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center was built in 1980. In 2003, changes to the OC Fair's Master Plan, adopted by the OC Fair Board, resulted in removal of half the original Equestrian Center acreage and the loss of over 100 stalls. This removal significantly reduced available stabling in Orange County, and also reduced the Equestrian Center's ability to accommodate relocation of large animals during an emergency.

During the recent Santiago Canyon fire, for example, the remaining portion of the Equestrian Center served as an Emergency Evacuation Center for large animals. The complete elimination of the Equestrian Center facilities would further reduce the number of available Emergency Evacuation Centers in the county, seriously compromising emergency housing of large animals.

During the past ten years, Orange County has suffered the closure of numerous stable facilities, which has resulted in the loss of approximately 1,400 stalls. The closing of these stables has increased waiting lists at the few remaining stables, and has driven up stall rental prices by as much as 40-50 %.

Considering the substantial loss of stable facilities, there is a significant public benefit in preserving the remaining stables in Orange County---including the stables located at the Orange County Fairgrounds. The Equestrian Center is one of only two remaining major stabling facilities in all of the Northwest County.

Following a discussion of these impacts, the RRTAC unanimously voted to support the preservation of the equestrian facilities at the Orange County Fairgrounds. This committee opposes any action that further reduces the number of available stalls at the Fairgrounds, and encourages the OC Fair Board and equestrian community to work together to preserve this vital and historic resource, expand its service to the local community, and integrate its use into OC Fair events.

So say we all,



Frederick Redell  
Chair, RRTAC

cc: Patricia C. Bates, Chair, Orange County Board of Supervisors  
Janice M. Posnikoff, Vice President, ECOC



ORANGE PARK ASSOCIATION  
PO BOX 2293 ORANGE, CA 92859

February 9, 2009

Ms. Julie Vandermost  
Chair, Board of Directors  
OC Fair and Events Center  
88 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Dear Ms. Vandermost,

Thank you for taking the time to allow public comment on January 22, 2009 concerning the Equestrian Center at the fair grounds.

As you were able to see there is a rather large contingent that is most concerned at the possibility of losing the equestrian center. This center has a rich history of serving not only the equestrian community, but fair goers as well.

This equestrian center has a history of being part of the fair and in recent years, for some unknown reason, there have not been any equestrian events that could stimulate the public's interest and help the fair with added attractions for the public's participation. This is a terrible oversight and could easily be rectified.

Given the heritage and the history that horses have had in Orange County this would be a loss of monumental proportions. The 4H clubs of Orange County have used this facility to conduct Horsemanship Shows that have led members to participate at the state level and our kids are our most important asset! What a loss that would be for them.

The fairground has served as an emergency evacuation center in times of need and that would be another huge loss for our equestrian areas. This equestrian center is one of the last public boarding facilities in Orange County and we can ill afford to have it shuttered.

I understand that your board is feeling the pressure of having to find additional space for venues that do not operate on a year round basis and the “highest and best use” of this site may not be for horses. I would beg to differ with that argument as the highest and best use could be any development for the entire fairgrounds and that would be wrong for the public.

As for the need for additional parking, as I suggested in my comments before you, there are many options that may fulfill the requirements needed. There is a large parking facility at Orange Coast College that could be better used. People could and should be encouraged to “park and ride” to the fairgrounds from outlying neighborhoods. This would promote carpooling and put the fair at the “cutting edge” of conservation.

I appreciate the time and consideration that you will be giving to the equestrian center. Please keep in mind the rich history of equestrians at the fairgrounds, the history of horses in Orange County, how equestrians could play a role in the fair, the greater need of this facility for public good, and our children’s need of this facility.

We can all find a place to park our cars, but it is getting more and more difficult to have a place to “park” our horses.

Thank you for time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Tom Davidson  
President, Orange Park Association

Cc: Bill Campbell, Supervisor 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Chris Norby, Supervisor 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Janet Nguyen, Supervisor 1<sup>st</sup> District  
John Moorlach, Supervisor 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Patricia Bates, Board Chair, Supervisor 5<sup>th</sup> District



BETH KROM, Councilmember

[www.ci.irvine.ca.us](http://www.ci.irvine.ca.us)

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City of Irvine, One Civic Center Plaza, P.O. Box 19575, Irvine, California 92623-9575 (949) 724-6233

April 9, 2009

Ms. Julie Vandermost, Board Chair  
Orange County Fair and Event Center  
88 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

RE: Support to Preserve the Existing Orange County Equestrian Center

Dear Ms. Vandermost:

I am writing to respectfully request that the Orange County Fair Board preserve the existing 7.5 acre equestrian center located at the Orange County Fair and Event Center. It is my understanding that your Board is considering the complete removal of one of the last remaining publicly owned equestrian uses in Orange County. Preserving the Orange County Equestrian Center serves a tremendous public benefit in providing recreational and business opportunities and serves as a significant asset in park, recreation and open space facilities.

Orange County has a rich and strong equestrian heritage that continues today. Despite this, there continues to be an increasing loss of equestrian facilities in Orange County. Since 1998, Orange County has witnessed the closure of numerous stable facilities with a cumulative impact of these closures resulting in the loss of approximately 1,400 horse stalls. Closing the Orange County Equestrian Center would only add to the tremendous impacts being felt by equestrian users throughout Orange County, including the disabled.

As you may know, horse-related activities provide important personal development opportunities for all ages. The Orange County Equestrian Center not only provides these types of development opportunities, but also serves the public 365 days per year with a whole range of equestrian options including boarding, low-level to high-level training, after-school camps, and free community programs for the disadvantaged. Horses and equestrian activities have played a significant role in Orange County for many years and we need to maintain the positive impacts associated with equestrian recreational activities and the services provided by the Orange County Equestrian Center for generations to come.

Support for Orange County Equestrian Center  
April 9, 2009  
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I urge you to lead the effort to consider alternative parking lot locations and options prior to making a decision to remove the Orange County Equestrian Center. I believe it is important that your Board consider all of the information available to them so that an informed decision will result in a truly winning plan for the Fair and all of the residents of Orange County.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions regarding my position on this matter, please feel free to contact me at (949) 724-6233.

Sincerely,



Beth Krom  
Councilmember

cc: Board of Directors, Orange County Fair and Event Center  
The Equestrian Coalition of Orange County

Marc Hedgpeth, President  
Equestrian Coalition of Orange County Inc.  
c/o KALB  
7695 E. Silver Dollar Lane  
Anaheim, CA 92808-1330

Board Members, OC Fair & Event Center:

Julie Vandermost  
Orange County Fair & Event Center  
88 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Kristina Dodge  
Orange County Fair & Event Center  
88 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Dale Dykema  
Orange County Fair & Event Center  
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Costa Mesa, CA 92626

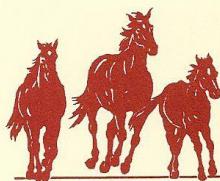
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David Ellis  
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Orange County Fair & Event Center  
88 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626



EQUESTRIAN  
COALITION  
OF ORANGE COUNTY

7695 E. Silver Dollar Lane  
Anaheim, CA 92808  
(714) 998-6865

May 14, 2009

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Proposed Removal of the Equestrian Center From the Orange County Fairgrounds**

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

We are writing to ask that you intervene to avert the Orange County Fair Board's misguided proposal to eliminate the equestrian center at the Orange County Fairgrounds (the "EQC") and replace it with another 7.5 acres of paving. Enclosed for your reference is an aerial photograph of the 150-acre fairgrounds, showing the EQC outlined in red, and a brochure describing services currently offered at the EQC.

The Orange County Fair & Events Center has long been central in its role as steward of the County's deep and vibrant heritage. Its mission has been focused on providing a link to California's agricultural heritage promoting the talents, interests and accomplishments of Californians everywhere through educational exhibits, entertainment and recreational opportunities. It seems inconsistent with this mission for the Fair Board to eliminate quality equestrian activities that have long served this local community.

Horses have always played a central role in the history and heritage of Orange County, even before the first fair was hosted in 1890 in what is now Orange County. From the vaqueros who rode the early ranchos, to the rural farms and burgeoning agricultural industry that were central to the early development of Orange County's prosperity, the horse has played a vital role in our county. With this knowledge in mind, horse stables continued to be a big part of the fair when the permanent site was established in Costa Mesa in 1949. In 2009, horse-related activities at the EQC continue to educate, inform and inspire each new generation of the public.

In 1980, a 15-acre EQC was constructed. However, in 2003 the Fair Board removed nearly half of

"Providing a unified voice concerning issues which enhance, affect, or threaten the equestrian lifestyle in Orange County"

it for additional parking and a maintenance yard, reducing and isolating the EQC to its present 7.5 acres (including parking) in the far northeast corner of the property. Nevertheless, the EQC has continued to offer a variety of horse-related activities for adults and children year-round. This is the last of only two stables in northwest Orange County, and it is home to nearly 160 horses and several for-hire training barns and riding schools, small business started and owned primarily by women. There are volunteer programs that provide free horsemanship classes to underprivileged children and both free and paid equine-assisted therapy to recovering substance abusers. In addition, local businesses benefit from equestrian-related spending.

Now the Fair Board is actively considering the complete removal of the remaining EQC so that it can be replaced with an asphalt parking lot. Orange County as a whole has witnessed the closure of numerous stable facilities in the last 20 years, which in turn has caused hardship among the equestrian community and taken away an amazing activity with few comparisons. Opportunities for horse ownership and the pursuit of equestrian activities are rapidly dwindling in the county and with them an experience that can only be truly understood through looking at the bond formed between a child and her first horse. Understanding that balance among commitment, devotion, hard work and responsibility is only a small part of the value an equestrian lifestyle can bring.

The Orange County Board of Supervisors and the city councils of Costa Mesa and numerous other local cities recently adopted resolutions opposing the removal of the EQC from the fairgrounds. Over 5,000 signatures have been collected on petitions opposing the removal of the EQC and thousands of additional signatures will be collected in the coming months. All these locally-based public expressions of concern and governmental efforts seem not to sway the local Board; however, ultimately the Fair Board remains answerable to you.

We know that you are supportive of the equestrian lifestyle and hold the horse in high regard. We know that equestrian activities are significant to your family. The First Lady herself described the importance of horses and riding in her development: "Looking back, riding gave me a sense of self at the age when young girls need to feel accomplished. As girls handle such a powerful animal, it gives them a sense of their own strength and capabilities. It is such an important thing for children to have something that they really love and can say and believe that, 'I am something.'"

We ask that you support the preservation of the Equestrian Center at the Orange County Fairgrounds. As representatives of the equestrian community, we assure you we will work together with the Fair Board not only to enhance this vital resource by reaching out even further to service our local communities, but also to increase the revenue the EQC returns to the Fairgrounds, including its incorporation as an integral element of the Fair itself.

The focus of the Fair Board on its vision of the Fairgrounds as a premier event center in Orange County should be balanced very carefully with the mission of preserving the rich and diverse heritage of the County. Other alternative parking options are available. Certainly the benefit of an additional lot for swap meets and overflow parking for a few weeks of the year should not override the loss of public benefits from a quality equestrian experience and year-round recreational and educational opportunities for county residents and youth organizations.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this request. We are happy to meet with you or your staff at any time to provide additional information, and should your schedule permit, we invite you to tour the EQC to see this important facility for yourself.

Respectfully,



Janice Posnikoff DVM, Vice President  
Equestrian Coalition of Orange County

cc: Secretary of Food & Agriculture A.G. Kawamura  
Orange County Supervisor Bill Campbell  
Costa Mesa City Council Member Katrina Foley